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SUNDAY GREETING — Wade Humphries (right), pastor of Longview Point Church, Hernando, visits with church members Nicholas Keith (left) and Alvan Kelly before Sunday School begins at the new church plant sponsored by Longview Heights Church in Olive Branch, Northwest Association in Hernando, and the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board through the Margaret Lackey State Mission Offering. (BP photo)



New Hernando church off to good start

HERNANDO, Miss. (BP and local reports) — At the outset, Longview Point Church opted to give eight percent of undesignated offerings to the Cooperative Program (CP), Southern Baptists' global missions effort, and two percent to the Northwest Association for local missions needs.

Now in their second year, they're bumping CP Missions up to 10%, plus three percent to the association. "We thought it was important for our church to build it into our DNA to give to missions," said Wade Humphries, pastor of the new church in Hernando.

"Whatever financial resources came in, we felt it was important to be faithful to invest in missions," Humphries said. "When we give to the Cooperative Program we are investing in the Kingdom of God and in eternity, because God uses our resources to see people saved. What better investment is there than that?"

The pastor described the Cooperative Program as "the most effective missions-sending system in existence. I've been Southern Baptist all my life. I've seen the way we send our missionaries and train people to be missionaries. The Cooperative Program is a vital way for churches to cooperate and get more done than one church could ever do by itself."

Mississippi churches send their Cooperative Program gifts to the Mississippi Baptist Convention, which retains a portion for the convention's programs in the state and sends the remainder to the Southern Baptist Convention to help fund programs there.

Begun in September 2002 with a core of 35 people from Longview Heights Church in nearby Olive Branch, Longview Point Church has grown to about 225 people in two Sunday morning worship services held in a former hardware store on the Hernando town square.



STRONG COMMITMENT — Longview Point Church, just over a year old but already strongly committed to Southern Baptists' Cooperative Program, currently meets in a former hardware store on the town square in Hernando. (BP photo)

"It's the power of God working in our midst," the pastor said. "We're careful to give Him all the credit and to get involved where He's involved."

Longview Point Church itself is an expression of Southern Baptist cooperation, Humphries said. Spearheaded by Longview Heights Church in Olive Branch, the new church also received assistance from Northwest Association in Hernando and the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board, which helped fund the church plant through the Margaret Lackey State Mission Offering.

About 125 people attended the first service, which followed an area-wide media thrust that included surveys and distribution of flyers. Attendance dropped to the mid-90s for a couple of weeks, then began edging upward week by week. By April 2003, the 160 or more worshipers were maxing out the space and a second service was added.

The rapid growth has happened because God has blessed the congregation's Bible-based focus, obedience to spread the Good News and to commitment to be involved in missions, Humphries said.

"Because God has been so gracious to our family of faith, we are responsible and accountable for being on His agenda, and His agenda is going," the pastor said. "That's why we're emphasizing that."

More than a dozen Longview Point Church members spent a week on a Navajo reservation in Arizona last summer where they worked in Vacation Bible School and led in evening services. Other members traveled to Missoula, Montana, to help with a new church. Four mission trips are in the planning stages for next summer.

The church is intentional about its missions commitment, the pastor said. In addition

to the hands-on involvement in missions trips, members have heard from several international missionaries on stateside assignment who have spoken to the church. The congregation also is in the process of adopting an unreached people group for prayer.

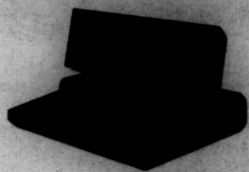
On Wednesday nights, the pastor passes out copies of receipts from the Mississippi Baptist Convention for the church's Cooperative Program giving. "It's a tangible, visible expression of our priority as a church," Humphries said. "If we say missions is important and preach on the Great Commission and talk about being involved in the Great Commission — all that takes financial resources."

"I try to stress to our church that we're not a lone ranger church. We're part of a whole uniting together to see the Kingdom expand to God's honor and glory."

Longview Point Church also recognizes its responsibility to reach out locally. The church participates in community events, such as the occasional open houses for businesses on the town square. The church provides free hot drinks, punch, refreshments, comfort facilities, and a place for people to get in out of the weather. The church entered a float in the town's Christmas parade last year. Later in the winter they passed out free packets of hot chocolate with information about the church on one side and a Gospel presentation on the other.

"We place a maximum amount of importance on the Lordship of Christ," Humphries added. "He's the head of the church. He gave us the Great Commission and we feel like we need to take that commandment seriously. He limits us to 'the ends of the earth,' and to fulfill that mandate, we need the Cooperative Program."

EDITOR'S NOTEBOOK



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Stocking stuffers no longer

Early sales reports indicate that pop music CDs are flying off store shelves this holiday gift season. Many of the larger stores in Mississippi that carry CDs have lowered the price in recent weeks to \$9.99 or less for some of the hottest performers in the business. That may not seem like a bargain basement price to us old-timers, but quite a few CDs these days go for anywhere from \$13.99-\$24.99. This year's lower sale prices have turned CDs into perfect stocking stuffers.

It's too bad the industry is just as wicked and perverse as every other form of secular entertainment in this country. Along with movies, television, and radio, the recording industry has for many years been in a race to see just how low they can take humanity. The Coarser the Better, seems to be the slogan adopted by the recording industry.

The worst offenders on today's music scene extol the virtues of raping their mothers, killing policemen, running drugs, shooting disrespectful girlfriends, and engaging in every form of perverse sex known to man. In the past five years, there have been quite a few number one hits that dealt with committing those crimes and many others.

The recording industry has never been a guardian of the country's morality, but the so-called "artists" of the last several years have taken us all to a new low — and society is paying the price.

Rapper Eminem, who has written and performed a number of songs that denigrate African-Americans and suggest killing homosexuals, reached a new low recently when the lyrics for his song, *We Are Americans*, were found floating around the Internet.

In the song, Eminem raps, "(Expletive deleted) money. I don't rap for dead presidents. I'd rather see the President dead." In the world of rap jargon, "dead presidents" refers to money, since most U.S. currency carries the image of a dead former president.

Are these the kind of songs we want in our children's stockings, hung with care by the fireplace? Do we want our teens repeating such lyrics over and over, until the threshold for such violent acts is reduced to zero in their developing minds? Christian parents should take a hard look (or listen, rather) at pop music.

Too many parents think pop music is harmless, regardless of the subject matter. "When I was growing up," they argue, "everything in pop music glorified drug use, but I didn't turn into a dope head." While that may be true, many other young people were ruined by the drugs glorified in those songs. Even more to the point, how many songs of any pop music era called upon youths to torture, murder, rape, and destroy anyone who gets in the way of their pleasure? A whole music culture has sprung up around such behavior, and is being supported by unwitting parents and children.

WorldNet Daily columnist Thomas Jipping thinks all of this has a tragic effect.

The teenage murderer of Officer William Robertson in Milwaukee said he was inspired by lyrics from gangsta rapper Tupac Shakur. The teenage murderer of Texas State Trooper Bill Davidson actually defended himself by arguing that violent gangsta rap motivated him to kill. To murder his father in Los Angeles, Christopher Golly lured him to his bedroom by blasting on his stereo a rock song in which the singer fantasizes about killing his father.

Mitchell Johnson, who with Andrew Golden killed a teacher and four students and wounded 10 others in Jonesboro, Ark.,

"I'M SIXTY YEARS OLD
AND I DON'T RECOGNIZE
A SINGLE NAME ON THE
MUSIC CHARTS TODAY. THAT
SUITS ME JUST FINE!"



listened to Tupac Shakur. Kip Kinkel, who murdered his parents in Springfield, Ore., consumed the violent nihilism of shock-rock-er Marilyn Manson. So did Andrew Wurst, who killed a teacher at an eighth-grade dance in Edinboro, Pa.; Luke Woodham, who murdered his (mother) and (two) classmates in Pearl, Miss.; and Columbine killers Eric Harris and Dylan Klebold."

Christian parents should think twice before buying such music, at \$9.99 or any other price. Too much of the sin to which our children are exposed is out of our control, but their CD collection is one thing among many that we parents can control.

For the sake of our children, we'd better find the courage to do that. Holiday gift-giving 2003 is the perfect place to start.

GUEST OPINION:



The urgency of three minutes

By James T. Draper, president
LifeWay Christian Resources, Nashville

You're about to sit down to watch a movie or your favorite team play but realize something's missing. Bingo! You remember the popcorn. You rush into the kitchen, grab a bag from the pantry, and throw it into the microwave. Three minutes. That's how long it will take. What do you do with those three minutes? Sometimes three minutes seems like an eternity, doesn't it?

It is, for some people. Twelve people die in Central America every three minutes without knowing Jesus Christ as their Savior. Imagine what that means for the 138 million people who live there. Central America is one of the smaller geographic areas on earth. Think more globally. One-fourth of the world's population — 1.5 billion people — has little or no prospect of hearing the good news of God's love. Most haven't even heard the name of Jesus Christ. Romans 10:15 says, "How welcome are the feet of those who announce the Gospel of good things!" (HCSB)

Southern Baptists have been people of Good News for nearly 150 years. One of the main reasons we formed into a convention was our focus on missions.

We wanted to reach the world for Christ. Only God knows the millions of people who have received Jesus because Southern Baptists sent a missionary to share Him with them.

God is still at work in unprecedented ways through Southern Baptist missionaries and their co-workers. Three of 13 church-planting indicators — new churches, new outreach groups, and new believers in

discipleship training — jumped 40% in 2002. As many as 20,000 people are coming to faith in Christ each day in China.

However, our task is far from completed. Southern Baptists have always risen to the occasion and now the situation is critical. God has been calling out record numbers of new missionaries from among our churches, more than 1,000 each of the past two years, to a



That all peoples
may know Him
Follow God's Purpose

2003 Lottie Moon Christmas Offering

National Goal: \$133 million
Challenge Goal: \$150 million

record 5,607 on the field. Our hearts ache for the world's people's to know Christ.

Now it's time for our pocket-books to ache a little as well. Churches continue to give more each year through the Cooperative Program (CP) and the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering (LMCO), but giving has not kept pace with the increase in appointed missionaries.

From 2000-02 the missionary count grew 8.7% but income from CP and LMCO increased just 1.5%. Southern Baptists average a little more than eight dollars per person to LMCO.

The Lottie Moon Christmas Offering plays a critical role in supporting the work of Southern Baptist missionaries, providing about half of the IBM's total budget; every penny received through the offering goes to support missionaries and their ministries. IMB President Jerry Rankin has challenged each church to increase its goal this year by 33% to signify the kind of sacrifice needed to reach our lost world for Christ.

Ask God how He wants to use you to reach the people of the world with the Gospel. It's a great way to fill the time while you're waiting for your popcorn.

Network to examine postmodern church

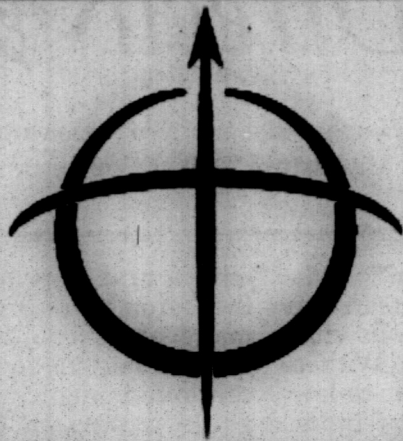
ALPHARETTA, Ga. (BP) — A new television special produced by the North American Mission Board (NAMB) will introduce a secular audience on ABC-affiliated stations to a different kind of church — those designed to offer a distinctly postmodern approach to worship and the Christian faith.

The special, entitled *The Changing Face of Worship*, details the response of nine different churches to the rise of postmodern culture. It began airing on local affiliates Dec. 7, with scheduling at the discretion of the local station.

Eric Ramsey, NAMB church planting specialist and one of the executive producers for the project, said the goal was to reintroduce the church to "an entire generation to a generation-and-a-half of people" who have found the church irrelevant.

"Their experience with church is that 'you need to change all of your ways and be like us,'" he said. "One thing that I would like the national ABC audience to understand is that there are churches that are intentionally trying to connect with people just like them, and provide relevant expressions of worship, relevant ministries and relevant activities without compromising biblical truth and integrity."

The documentary is part of the *Vision and Values* series of the Interfaith Broadcast Commission. Other NAMB-produced network documentaries in the same series have tackled issues ranging from the faith of professional athletes to the role of churches in the Civil Rights movement.



**NORTH AMERICAN MISSION BOARD, SBC
NAMB**

The churches profiled include a mix of Southern Baptist and other evangelical congregations, with a common theme being that they were designed to attract individuals with a postmodern mindset.

"As the modern era of our culture gives way to what is widely known as postmodernism, many churches are finding that more and more people are looking elsewhere for spiritual answers," the introduction to the video states. "Yet, not all churches are declining. Some have embraced this challenge as a call to action — and a call to think in new ways about how to convey their unchanging message."

Noted author Leonard Sweet further describes the fundamental premise of these churches. "Whatever the culture is, you incarnate the Gospel, embed the Gospel in that culture. You go live with them, you eat with them and you become one of them. And

you learn their music and you learn their language. And these emerging churches are just learning the language of this postmodern culture."

Ed Stetzer, NAMB church planting specialist and author of *Planting New Churches in a Postmodern Age*, also contributed to the effort.

Churches profiled in the special include:

- Mosaic, a Los Angeles congregation known for its multi-sensory worship experiences. "One of the distinctions of Mosaic is that we understand that all creation is here to draw us to worshipping God," pastor Erwin McManus says in the special. "...We worship through sound, and sight, and touch, and taste, and feel."

- Mars Hill Church, a Seattle congregation that has grown to 1,200 members in six years with its incorporation of the city's diverse musical styles. "To mediate the truth of Jesus through culture you need to speak the same language as the people in the culture," pastor Mark Driscoll says. "What that means is, musically, it should sound the same as everything else that is being played. But content should be different and should be something that does align itself with the truth of Scripture and the truth of Jesus."

- The Kidz Church ministry of First Baptist Church of Springdale, Ark., which takes a radical approach to children's worship in an interactive game show-styled setting known as "Wacky World." "We've had parents tell us that their kids, on Saturday, will begin to jump up and down and go, 'Yes! It's only one more day to church. We can't wait for tomorrow,'" says Dale Hudson, children's pastor at the church.

- OneEighty, the youth ministry of Church on the Move in Tulsa, Okla., which attracts 1,000 to 1,400 youth each week from a cross-section of cultures. "Dakota tribal wisdom says that when your horse dies, the best strategy is to dismount. And the truth is that a lot of what we've been doing in the church in reaching young people today is



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just a dead horse," says Blaine Bartel, the ministry's director. "It's not working anymore. It's not taking us where we need to go. So we've got to get off that horse. And we've got to get on a different horse."

Bernie Hargis, the program's producer and director, suggested individuals consult local listings for airtimes — or contact their local ABC affiliate.

"They need to ask for it by name, and they need to mention it is part of the *Vision and Values* series," Hargis said. Because they usually do not have commercial sponsorship, the programs often air during unsold time slots — often on Sundays. Stations have offered favorable scheduling in the past in response to viewer interest. "If stations get enough calls, it makes a difference," he said.

Programming information is also available through www.interfaithbroadcasting.com.

Looking back

10 years ago

The U.S. Supreme Court refuses to hear a challenge to the Boy Scouts of America's requirement that members affirm a belief in God. Without comment, the court rejects the appeal of an Illinois youth who argued that the requirement violates a federal anti-discrimination law.

20 years ago

The memory of Mississippian Arthur Flake, designer of Baptist Sunday School organization and methods, is honored during the recent Mississippi Baptist Convention. A plaque was presented to First, Winona, by the Southern Baptist Historical Commission, the Baptist Sunday School Board, and the Mississippi Baptist Convention.

50 years ago

Representative Paul W. Shafer, powerful member of the U.S. House of Representatives committee on the armed services, assails the new Pentagon administrative ruling that allows liquor legally to be sold at army posts as "unnecessary, unwise, and unfair."

Poll: Teens are more pro-life

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP) — American teenagers are more pro-life than the general adult population, a new survey by Gallup shows. The survey of 517 teens ages 13-17 found that on every abortion-related question they are more conservative when compared to all adults in a separate Gallup poll.

Thirty-two percent of teens, but only 17% of all adults, said that abortion should be illegal in all circumstances. Forty-seven percent of teens, compared to 55% of all adults, said abortion should be legal only under certain circumstances. Additionally, 19% of teens and 26% of adults said abortion should be legal in all circumstances.

Just as encouraging to pro-lifers, 72% of the teens in the survey said they believe abortion is "morally wrong." Twenty-six percent said it was "morally acceptable." The August survey, released Nov. 18, was conducted through an Internet methodology using an online research panel that Gallup says is "designed to be representative of the entire U.S. population."

While polls show that teens are more pro-life than the general population, they also show that teens are more liberal on the issue of same-sex "marriage." For instance, a Gallup poll this summer found that while 55% of adults opposed same-sex "marriage," 61% of adults ages 18-29 supported it.

FABULOUS FACTS FROM A FOX HUNTER

Over the Thanksgiving holidays, we traveled over to Alabama to my wife's childhood home to visit with her mother. It was the first time we had been back home since her father passed away and we were both constantly reminded of him not being there. Something we would see, or hear, or expect to hear, or wish we could see, would fill our minds with awareness of how many ways he had touched our lives. Now, he was gone!

When we lost her father, we lost a lot! Yet, there was a lot that he left with us. Almost everywhere you looked around the house or the yard, there were reminders of one of his favorite and life-long passions. He had been an avid fox hunter. In fact, it was only hours before he went home to be with the Lord that he had been out on what would be his final hunt.

Our visit triggered hundreds of memories about him and numerous incidences in his life. I recalled being with him about a year ago as he was going to take one of his prized dogs for a night of hunting. His mind was on his favorite pastime and he began to spin an old fox-hunting tale. He told me about an old fox hunter friend of his named Oscar. Oscar was 92 years old but still loved to go out and hunt and could sit and listen to the dogs run all night long as good as the next guy!

Now, Oscar had lost all of his teeth a good many years ago and pretty much lived on a diet of tobacco. According to my daddy-in-law, old Oscar chewed a pack or so of tobacco every day. Now, try to get this picture in your mind as my father-in-law related it to me. Here is old Oscar (92 years old), still fox-hunting and living with a wad of tobacco in his mouth most of the time. Mr. Moore told Oscar, "One day there is going to be a great meeting." Oscar inquired,



Directions

Jim Futral, executive director-treasurer
Mississippi Baptist Convention Board

"What do you mean?" Mr. Moore explained, "I mean one day your nose and your chin are going to meet!" With a gentle laugh, my father-in-law held up his thumb and index finger and measured about half an inch and said that Oscar's nose was about that far from his chin already. Oscar looked at him, smiled, and just kept on chewing!

It was at that point in the conversation, that according to Mr. Moore, old Oscar began to tell that he had done some figuring. I suppose he had been figuring and philosophizing, because old Oscar said that he had been chewing tobacco since he was a young boy and that he had done some math to see just how much tobacco he had consumed over the decades. My father-in-law inquired, "Well, how much was it?" Now, my father-in-law couldn't remember the exact amount, but according to Oscar it was several tons of tobacco that he had chewed!

Now, please do not misunderstand me, for I am not promoting chewing tobacco, or snuff, or any other kind of tobacco use; but, it did strike me that here, in fascinating "country" reality, were some fabulous facts from an old fox hunter — facts from which you and I could benefit!

• Fact one has to do with **continuation**. Can you imagine what happens to you over a period of 80 or 85 years, when you chew tobacco every day? Probably, the changes would not be good, but changes will occur because you continue doing it. On the flip side there are so many wonderful things that people fail to achieve,

enjoy, and embrace because they don't continue. Now, many of us could have been good musicians if we had just continued practicing the piano, guitar, drums, or flute. Also, many of us would be in good physical condition if we had just continued walking, exercising, keeping our appetite under control, or staying away from destructive things.

How many of us could be strong spiritually and making an impact for the Kingdom of God if continuation had been a part of our lives? Yet, somewhere we stopped attending, ceased reading our Bible every day, quit growing, and wondered why our spirits became so weak and depleted. The key is continuation!

• Another fabulous fact that came to my mind had to do with **concentration**. When you focus on doing even a small thing faithfully, it begins to mount up and make a difference. Just a small little drop of water, dripping onto a hard, solid rock surface will eventually wear the rock away — concentration! Do the small thing that God has called you to do faithfully and it will mount up to pay eternal dividends.

We need to be reminded that it is not always the person that gives the big gift that is the big giver! No, the person who makes a contribution of whatever size, consistently, is probably going to make the greater impact.

Years ago a young man in the town where I was pastor, would come by the church every Sunday morning on his way to his church. He was not a member of our fellowship and rarely came to a service, but he always came by early

Sunday morning and left his envelope with one dollar in it. Consistently, at the end of each year, our church records showed that he gave \$52.00 to the ministries and the missions through our church. We had people who came pretty often who occasionally gave an offering yet, they did not give as much as that person who just concentrated on doing a "small" thing well.

There is a reoccurring principle in Scripture that maybe is best understood when it is expressed in Jesus' words that if we will be faithful over a few things, the Lord will make us ruler over many things. It is far better for us to concentrate on doing the small things that we are able to do than it is for us to talk about the big things that we are unable to do.

Not to belabor the point, but think about old Oscar. Time and again, throughout the day and over the weeks, he would take just an ounce or so of chewing tobacco and chomp away on it, or in later years, gum away on it. In time, an ounce would become a pound, and pounds would become many more pounds until tons had been consumed! Concentration is a fabulous fact.

• The last important and significant fact that came to my mind was **celebration**. As bad a habit as it may be, old Oscar enjoyed what he was doing when he was chewing tobacco. He may have acquired a toothless grin, but he delighted in it. I can think of very few things that make a greater difference in the way we go about doing what we do for the Lord, than to enjoy what we do. Regardless, if it is giving, singing, preaching, visiting, or ministering in Jesus' name the people who enjoy doing what they are doing exude a kind of contagious and good spirit that makes a difference in the folks around them!

Celebration in Kingdom work is an often overlooked and under-appreciated dimension that makes what we do worthwhile. Whatever you do in the Lord's work if you gripe, fuss, moan, groan, complain, and bicker about it, you negate every good thing that could come from it. It doesn't matter what it is, if you don't enjoy serving the Lord in that capacity, then the benefits and the blessings are lost!

Have you ever known of someone who kept records at the church and didn't like it, or people who sang in the choir and complained about it, or someone who taught a Sunday School class and bemoaned the fact, or even a person who attended church only to belly-ache about all that is taking place there?

You might not be into chewing tobacco, but may God help you, me, and all of His children to get geared up to celebrate what God is doing among us! It does make a difference when you enjoy what you are doing in life. If you don't believe me, ask ole Oscar!

Muslims as spiritual allies? Panel says no

LOUISVILLE, Ky. (BP) — Should Christians view Muslims as monotheistic allies in the culture wars? Not according to panelists at a symposium sponsored by Southern Seminary's Carl F.H. Henry Institute for Evangelical Engagement in Louisville, Ky.

The panelists, depicting Allah as fundamentally different than the God of Christianity, said efforts to unite Islam and Christianity threaten to compromise the Gospel.

The symposium featured seminary President R. Albert Mohler Jr.; Russell D. Moore, assistant professor of Christian theology and executive director of the Henry Institute and a Mississippi native; and Ergun Caner, associate professor of theology and history at Liberty University in Lynchburg, Va.

Peter Kreeft, professor of philosophy at Boston College, was scheduled to speak at the mid-November session but was unable to attend due to a family emergency.

However, more than 500 people listened as panelists responded to Kreeft's book, *Ecumenical Jihad*, in which Kreeft argues that Christians and Muslims hold many beliefs in common as monotheists and must unite in the fight against secularism. Fighting between the two religions, Kreeft writes, unnecessarily detracts from positive work that could be accomplished.

Caner, who was a Muslim for 20 years before committing his life to Christ, described Kreeft's view as ignoring irreconcilable differences between Islam and Christianity.

"To say that our ...monotheistic religions worship the same God, that as sons of Abraham we can unite on a common cause of this said God against the threat of humanism, in my mind ignores the central tenets of each system and insults the adherents of each system," Caner said.

Though Muslims believe that Allah is the sovereign creator, they deny other

facets of the Christian doctrine of God such as the Trinity and the deity of Christ, Caner said. "It is not the same God," he said. "The Koran is explicit not to say Trinity... We're not talking about the same God."

In fact, Islamic eschatology teaches that one day Jesus will return to "break all the crosses" and "kill and send to hell every Jew and Christian who did not accept Allah," Caner said. "As much as I would love for there to be... unity, you cannot unite with those who seek your death for the sole reason of your conversion," Caner said.

Mohler, in his comments, said Kreeft's thesis stems from a false notion that all monotheists share a common worldview. Prior to Vatican II, a pivotal Roman Catholic council in the 1960s, it was

commonly acknowledged that Christianity and Islam hold contradictory theologies, Mohler said. After Vatican II, it became popular to lump all monotheistic religions into one category.

"Vatican II went so far as officially to embrace all monotheists as sons of Abraham and included in God's economy of salvation," Mohler said. "This means Christians and Jews and Muslims."

Among the sharp differences between Christianity and Islam, as noted by Mohler: Christianity's insistence on the full deity of Christ versus Islam's denial that God could ever have a son.

"The issue ...is the doctrine of the Trinity, in particular the doctrine of Christ," Mohler said. "We must face the fundamental question of how one knows the one true and living God. The Scripture

is abundantly clear that God is known through Jesus Christ the Son." Islam, in contrast, insists that "Allah is one, and he has no son," Mohler said. "The only ground of

our Christian identity is ... the confession that Jesus Christ is Lord." Efforts at waging the great battles of the age, he said, are "fundamentally limited to those who believe and confess that Jesus Christ is Lord."

Because God reveals moral standards through human conscience, Christians and Muslims will agree on some cultural issues, Mohler noted. But the two religions will never unite fully because Muslims reject God's authoritative revelation, the Bible.

"When we come to revelation, it's not just any book," he said. "It is the holy Scriptures. It is explicitly not the Koran, which is explicitly a different worldview." Common ground "from time to time on limited issues we understand by common grace," he said. "A common platform to address the culture war? I think not. The seductive nature of that idea makes it all the more dangerous."

Moore, a Biloxi native, said Muslims also misunderstand the fatherhood of God. "God the Father does not simply mean that God is caring," Moore said. "God the Father, in Scripture, is a specific truth claim that God is the Father of Jesus Christ. We cannot start with some generic concept of God and then move to a fuller revelation in Jesus Christ. God reveals Himself as Father, Son, Holy Spirit and as the God and Father of Jesus Christ."

Some thinkers minimize the distinctions between Islam and Christianity, but Scripture teaches that only followers of Christ will inherit eternal life, he said.

"The issues here are about more than foreign policy, although foreign policy is at stake," he said. "The issue is about more than the culture wars although the culture wars are at stake. The issue is billions and billions of people for whom Christ died, who right now are chanting, 'There is no God but Allah, and Muhammad is his prophet.'"

"For millions and millions of Muslims, peace — defined as being ignored by the Gospel — is hell. If we love Muslims as we love ourselves, we will take the Gospel to the ends of the earth."



Moore



Caner



Kreeft

Bush: Christians, Muslims worship 'same God'

LONDON (BP) — In an answer that is sure to upset evangelicals and other members of his Christian base of supporters, President George W. Bush said Nov. 20 in London that Christians and Muslims worship the same God.

Speaking at a joint news conference with British Prime Minister Tony Blair during his state visit to England, Bush was asked by a reporter about his thoughts on how the war on terrorism and his promotion of freedom intersects with his Christian faith.

The reporter asked, "Mr. President, when you talk about peace in the Middle East, you've often said that freedom is granted by the Almighty. Some people who share your beliefs don't believe that Muslims worship the same Almighty. I wonder about your views on that and Mr. Prime Minister's, as a man also of faith, I'd like to get your reaction to that."

"I do say that freedom is the Almighty's gift to every person," Bush answered. "I also



PRESIDENT IN PRAYER — President George W. Bush (right) and wife Laura (second from right) bow their heads in prayer during a recent National Day of Prayer ceremony in the White House. They were joined in prayer by James Dobson (second from left) and his wife Shirley, who chairs the annual prayer initiative. An unabashed evangelical Christian, the President has come under fire for equating the God of Christianity with Allah of Islam. (BP photo courtesy of The White House)

condition it by saying freedom is not America's gift to the world. It's much greater than that, of course, and I believe we worship the same God."

Blair avoided the Christianity-Islam question and

instead gave a general answer about freedom. "I believe that if people are given the chance to have freedom, whatever part of the world they're in, whatever religion they practice, whatever faith they have, if they're given

the chance to have freedom, they welcome it," he said.

Richard Land, president of the Southern Baptist Ethics & Religious Commission in Nashville, said that while he respects Bush he believes the president is wrong.

"Like many other Americans I applaud the president as a man of deep religious faith who attempts to bring that faith conviction to bear on public policy issues," Land told Baptist Press. "However, we should always remember that he is Commander-in-Chief, not theologian-in-chief, and when he says that he believes that Muslims and Christians worship the same God, he is simply mistaken."

Scripture "is clear" on the issue, Land added. "There is one God and His name is Jehovah and His only begotten Son is Jesus Christ of the seed of Abraham and Isaac, whose mother was the Jewess virgin, Mary. Jesus our Savior has made it clear that we must know His Father through faith in Him and Him alone," he said.

Barrows gives collection to Southern

LOUISVILLE, Ky. (BP) — Cliff Barrows, longtime music and programming director for the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association, has donated his collection of 298 hymnals and 13 additional music-related books to Boyce Centennial Library at Southern Seminary in Louisville, Ky. He chose the seminary at the urging of a seminary professor and because of existing connections with Billy Graham via Southern's school of missions, evangelism and church growth which bear Graham's name. The seminary's Boyce Library also contains a collection of materials from the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association's early years.

The Barrows collection includes songbooks from Graham crusades, compilations by Barrows, along with solo and duet songbooks used by the Graham ministry. Barrows made it a point to buy hymnals from each country the Graham crusades visited, his favorites being from England and Scotland. Many hymnals in the collection are in foreign languages including French, German, Spanish, Japanese, Chinese, Welsh, Russian, and Swedish.

Barrows has served alongside Billy Graham for the past 58 years. Barrows, who says his favorite hymns are Great is Thy Faithfulness and And Can It Be? has a deep affinity for classic Christian hymns. Barrows says he is encouraged by a renewed interest in the hymns.

"I am glad to see a resurgence of interest in the old hymns," Barrows said. "The words to the old hymns are full of great theology... As Stephen Olford once said, great theology produces great hymnology which produces great doxology. I love the stories of the old hymns... I believe God uses them to speak to the hearts of men today... I hope this donation will be helpful to seminarians."

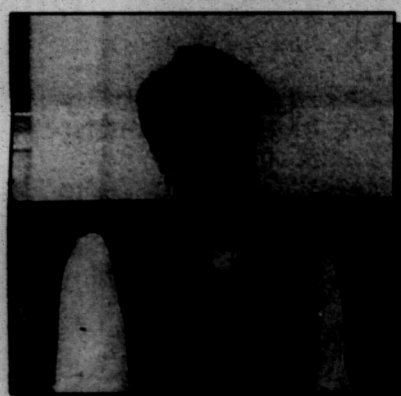
JUST FOR THE RECORD



GAs of Grace Chapel, Brooklyn



Branch Piano Dedication, Morton



Lanita Roland



Register, Walters, and Kimbrell, pastor



Holly Church Family Sunday, Corinth

The GAs of Grace Chapel Church, Brooklyn, held a bake sale to raise funds for the Lottie Moon Christmas offering. They raised \$70. Pictured (from left) are Nina Anderson, Kayla McClendon, Bertha McClendon, JoAnna White, and Nadine Anderson.

The Gilead Retreat and Conference Center, near Etta, will present Christmas on Reflection Lake December 18-27 at 7 p.m. nightly. The purpose is to tell by sight and sounds the story of Jesus. Admission is free, but donations will be accepted. This is not a drive-through. For more information, call (662) 234-4465.

Bethlehem Church, Laurel, recently celebrated being Debt Free in 2003 by burning the note on their building. The church began the debt free campaign in January this year and celebrated being completely out of debt at their Thanksgiving service. Pictured (from left) are Jack Register,



Christmas on Reflection Lake



Macedonia Church Mission Team, Petal

Scottie Walters, and Cary Kimbrell, pastor.

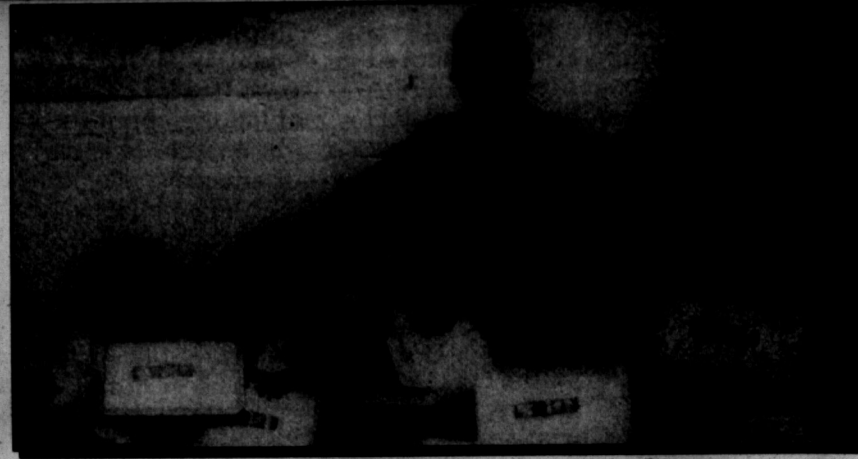
Holly Church, Corinth, recently held Family Sunday in promotion with High Attendance Sunday School on November 23 with 172 in worship attendance. Immediate and extended families with the most members present, and the family member who traveled the greatest distance were recognized. Tony Morrow is pastor.

The mission team at Macedonia Church, Petal, visited a youth ranch in Dragoon, Ariz., this summer. Men did construction work at the ranch, and ladies held VBS at Dragoon Church. Pictured are the mission team members and children of the couple that run the ranch.

The members of Branch Church, Morton, held a piano dedication service September 28 to dedicate their new Ritmuller Baby Grand Piano. Opal Irby is the pianist, Mayzelle Coward is the organist, Norman Hughes is minister of music, and Michael Giles is pastor.

For pastor appreciation, the ladies of Hurricane Creek Church, Sandy Hook, honored Lanita Roland, the pastor's wife, with a basket of items. Curtis Roland, pastor, received a monetary gift.

The GAs of Providence Church, Hattiesburg, participated in Operation Christmas Child. They held a bake sale to



GAs of Providence Church, Hattiesburg

help raise money for the project. They completed 50 boxes. The GAs pictured (from left, front) are Abbey Cascio, Laken

Much of the Hispanic work in northwest Mississippi grew from Hispanics who once attended the Parchman

Lowery, Megan Caves, Anna Kate Cowart, Kyleigh Campbell, (back) leader Pam Bates, and leader Tina Caves.

Pictured (from left) are David Bodenheimer, associate pastor, and Gary Richardson, pastor, both of North Oxford Church, Oxford, standing beside the new church sign for the Hispanic Mission, a gift from Charleston Industries, Charleston, and Calvary Chapel, Parchman.

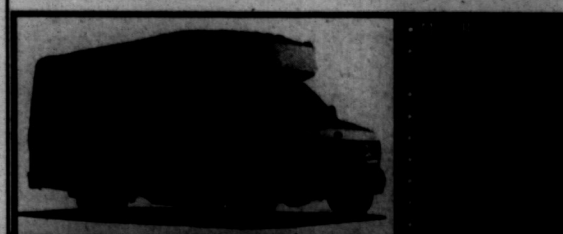
church's bilingual service. Workers in the Hispanic churches often come from team members who worked in Mexico with the Parchman church.



Bodenheimer and Richardson

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NAMES IN THE NEWS

John Johnson recently received his 43 year pin for perfect attendance in Sunday School at Briarwood Church, Meridian. Pictured (from left) are Thomas J. Wood, pastor emeritus and pastor of Salem Church, Lauderdale, and Johnson.

Wood and Johnson

Timothy Black was ordained November 16 by Harmony Church, Attala County. He has been called as

pastor of Hopewell Church, Choctaw County. Pictured (from left) are George Pitts, pastor of Harmony, Black, and Bobby Wagoner, Attala County Missionary.

The Greens and Jim Taylor, pastor



Faulkner and Gentry

Sgt. 1st Class Clint Faulkner of the 112th MP Battalion and a member of Midway Church, Jackson, was guest of honor on his last Sunday before deploying for active duty in the Middle East. Charles Gentry, pastor, presented him with a certificate and a book from the church.



Pitts, Black, and Wagoner



Star Church Deacon Ordination, Star

Glendale Church, Leland, recently ordained Frank Terry as a minister. Pictured (from left) are Terry, Roy Webb, and Mark Pilgrim, pastor.

Star Church, Star held a deacon ordination September 21. Pictured (from left) are deacons Eiland Harris, Keith Townsend, Chris Craddock, and Donnie Boykin. Vic Bowman is pastor.

Lake Como Church, Bay Springs, ordained Tony M. Green a deacon August 17. Jim Taylor is pastor.

Oral Church, Hattiesburg, held a deacon ordination November 9 for James Hatten. Pictured (from left) are Johnny Martin, pastor, Hatten and Harvey Fillingane.

The Barnes Crossing Church Choir, Saltillo, will present a cantata, A Night to Remember, on December 21 during the 11 a.m. worship service. Harrell Hill is the music director and Horace Thomas is pastor. All are invited.



Martin, Hatten, and Fillingane



Terry, Webb, and Pilgrim

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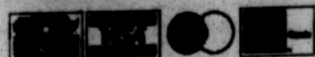
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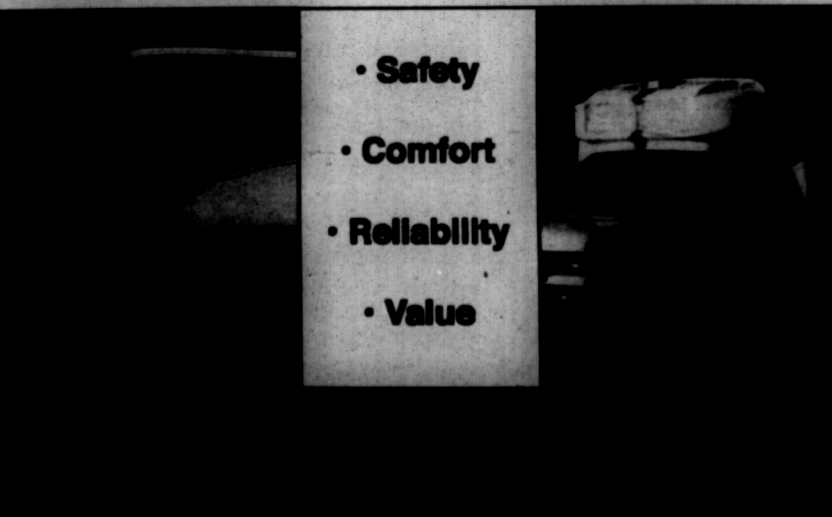
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MISSISSIPPI BAPTISTS

Gann tapped for Men's Ministry slot

Jackson, MS (Special) — The Executive Committee of the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board (MBCB), meeting December 2 in the Baptist Building in Jackson, approved a replacement consultant for the Men's Ministry Department and selected its officers for the coming year.

Don Gann, pastor of Wynndale Church, Terry, for more than six years, was tapped as a consultant in the Men's Ministry Department to replace Mark Lott, who left earlier this year for a job in the private sector. Prior



Gann

to pastoring Wynndale Church, Gann was Baptist Student Union (BSU) director at Mississippi College in Clinton and East Central Community College in Decatur.

"The most impressive thing that I see in Don is a deep love for missions and for God's work. He presently serves an outstanding, growing church and brings this leadership ability and pulpit expertise. I feel he has been well-prepared by God for this position and will add strength to our ministry in the department and convention," said Men's Ministry Director Jim Didlake.

The Executive Committee elected as chairman Gary Richardson, pastor of North Oxford Church, Oxford. Serving with Richardson as vice-chairman will be Forrest Sheffield, pastor of Harrisburg Church, Tupelo, and as secretary Wayne VanHorn, pastor of First Church, Columbia.

The committee also approved changes to the MBCB employee policy and adopted the report of the Committee on Board Organization, which assigns board members to the respective committees on which they will serve during the year.

The Office of Continuing Education at Mississippi College, Clinton, hosted the Capital Area Student Council Workshop on November 19 (Jr. High) and November 20 (High School). Total attendance for the workshops was a record number of 1,814 high school students and sponsors from across the state of Mississippi and Louisiana. The workshop included a full morning of activity, entertainment, door prizes, breakout groups, and a motivational keynote speaker. The MC SGA and service club members led breakout groups.

The statewide workshop is designed to provide leadership training for student council members and officers. Steve Stanford, Vice-President of Student Affairs at MC, spoke about character and leadership to the Jr. High students. Dolphus Weary, Executive Director of Mission Mississippi, spoke to the High School students about believing in yourself and giving back to your community by confronting the problems of racism, poverty, and injustice. For those interested in similar workshops, call (601) 925-3264.



Mississippi College (MC) Continuing Education Workshop

JUST FOR THE RECORD

The Sanctuary Choir of Plainway Church, Laurel, will present a cantata, *The Holy Child*, December 21 at 11 a.m. The children's choir will be presenting the Christmas Story, in music and narration, at 6 p.m. A fellowship will follow.

The Sanctuary Choir, Orchestra, and Drama ministries of First Church,

Madison, will present their Christmas musical on December 12 at 7 p.m., December 13 at 2 p.m., and December 14 at 7 p.m. All are welcome. Admission is free. For more information, call (601) 856-6177.

To help those who are grieving, First Church, Jackson, will hold Celebration of Reflection,

a Christmas service to help hurting hearts, December 16 at 6 p.m. in the chapel. A reception will follow in Fellowship Hall West. All in the community are welcome.

New Life Fellowship Church, Oakland, will present City of Lights on December 12 and 13 at 6, 7, and 8 p.m. featuring Come Behold Him portrayed through live narration, drama, and caroling. Visitors are invited to tour the grounds, enjoy the lights and experience a glimpse of the first Christmas. Refreshments will be served. For more information, call (662) 623-0009. All are welcome. Jerry W. Smith is pastor.

Fernwood Church, Fernwood, will hold their Christmas Musical December 21 at 6 p.m. followed by a Christmas Fellowship. The Candlelight service will be held December 14 at 6 p.m. Jim Kultau is pastor.

Canaan Church, Choctaw, held their anniversary November 26. Calvin J. Isaac and Brenda John, both of Philadelphia, were the speakers. The church presented a certificate of appreciation to Isaac for 25 years of service as a deacon. The John family presented a 2004 planning calendar to the Isaac family. Refreshments were served.

STAFF CHANGES



Burnham

Whitesand Church, Prentiss, called Charles R. Burnham as pastor effective December 1. He previously served at Dry Creek

Church, Mendenhall.

Slayden Church, Marshall, called Dan Morgan as Youth and Outreach Minister in June. Morgan and his wife, Kara, attend Mid-America BTS,

Germantown, Tenn. Pictured (from left) are Dan, Cannon, and Kara Morgan. John Meek is interim pastor.



The Morgans

Miss. CP dips for Nov.

Gifts to the work of the Lord through the Mississippi Cooperative Program for the month of November totaled \$2,001,623, according to Jim Futral, executive director-treasurer of the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board which disburses the funds. November's total was \$663,221 (24.9%) below the amount given in the previous month, and \$340,496 (14.5%) below giving in the same period the previous year. Cooperative Program giving for the current fiscal year, which runs from January through December, stands at \$27,573,513 — \$523,930 (1.9%) less than last year at the same time, and \$1,386,542 (4.9%) below needs in the current budget. A total of \$4,019,274 in Cooperative Program gifts will have to be received during December if the 2003 Cooperative Program budget is to be fully funded. The Mississippi Cooperative Program budget is set for the upcoming fiscal year by messengers to the annual meeting of the Mississippi Baptist Convention. The Mississippi Cooperative Program funds such programs as the annual Mississippi Baptist Youth Evangelism Conference on December 29-30 at Mississippi College in Clinton; the Legislative Prayer Breakfast at the Baptist Building in Jackson on January 8; the Mississippi Baptist Symphony Orchestra retreat on January 9-10 at Madison Central High School in Madison; and Deacon Emphasis Week on January 11-17.

SBC CP up 5.94%

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP) — Year-to-date contributions through the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) Cooperative Program are up 5.93% compared to this same time frame in 2002, according to a news release from SBC Executive Committee President and Chief Executive Officer Morris H. Chapman. As of Nov. 30, 2003, the year-to-date total of \$31,684,550.02 for Cooperative Program (CP) Missions is \$1,774,527.18 ahead of the \$29,910,022.84 received at this same point last year. For the month, receipts of \$15,941,639.51 were 1.26%, or \$202,847.70, below the \$16,144,487.21 received in November 2002. Designated giving of \$8,099,599.38 for the same year-to-date period is 28.76%, or \$1,809,186.49, ahead of gifts of \$6,290,412.89 received at this point in 2002. The \$4,723,413.34 in designated gifts received last month is \$1,187,139.00 above the \$3,536,274.34 of November 2002, a 33.57% increase. For the SBC Cooperative Program Allocation Budget, the year-to-date total of \$31,684,550.02 is 103.70% of the \$30,553,851.66 budgeted, or \$1,130,698.36 more to support Southern Baptist ministries globally and across North America. The SBC operates on an Oct. 1-Sept. 30 fiscal year. The Cooperative Program is Southern Baptists' method of supporting missions and ministry efforts of state and regional conventions and the Southern Baptist Convention. The Cooperative Program total includes receipts from individuals, churches, state conventions, and fellowships for distribution according to the 2002-03 Cooperative Program Allocation Budget.



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Texas textbook battle spotlights evolution

AUSTIN, Texas (BP) — In a case that has both sides claiming victory, the Texas State Board of Education has adopted a series of high school biology textbooks that had been criticized for inaccuracies involving evolution.

The board voted 11-4 in November to adopt improved texts for the next seven years, which evolutionists claimed as a major victory. Still, the Seattle-based Discovery Institute noted a number of board members indicated remaining factual errors must be fixed before the books will be placed in students' hands.

"This is real progress in the cause of science education reform," said Bruce Chapman, president of the institute which cooperated with a Texas citizen network in challenging the books.

"We were already happy that a number of embarrassing errors that overstate the evidence for evolutionary theory were being fixed."

"We were also hoping that the board would require textbooks to include coverage of the peer-reviewed scientific weaknesses of evolutionary theory," Chapman added. "Unfortunately, there wasn't a majority on the board willing to enforce that. However, finally fixing these errors is an important first step to improving the accuracy of science education about evolutionary theory."

"The Discovery Institute lost," contended Steven Schafersman, president of Texas Citizens for Science Education, which is affiliated with the National Center for Science Education, an Oakland-based group that calls evolution a normal part of science.

"This was a victory for science, science education, and all the citizens of Texas," Schafersman said after the vote. "The books haven't been censored or dumbed down. The bogus weaknesses [about evolution] won't be in the books."



West

Because Texas trails only California in the number of textbooks ordered from publishers, the decision could conceivably impact school systems nationwide. That led to a hotly-contested debate in recent months, including a hearing in September at which 160 activists signed up to testify, according to a report in the Fort Worth Star-Telegram.

William Dembski, a Baylor University research professor who agrees with the Discovery Institute, noted that there is considerable debate in scientific circles about a mechanism for evolution — namely, how it occurred.

"All of the textbooks under consideration grossly exaggerate the evidence for neo-Darwinism evolution, pretending that its mechanism of natural selection acting on random genetic change is a slam dunk," Dembski told the Star-Telegram. "Not so."

A week before the board vote, the Discovery Institute issued a "top 10" list of the 20 corrections it said had already been made by publishers as a result of hearings in July and September.

The most significant involved the removal of a set of drawings known as "Haeckel's embryos" from two of three textbooks that included the diagrams. Named for German biologist Ernst Haeckel, the drawings purported to show early stage similarities in eight different species, such as humans, tortoises, frogs, and chickens.

John West, associate director of the Center for Science and Culture at the Discovery Institute, said Haeckel faked the diagrams. "People in the late 1800s and early 1900s were criticizing them, yet these diagrams had been in most textbooks until a few years ago," West said.

He credited Icons of Evolution, a 2000 book by institute fellow Jonathan Wells,

with spotlighting the problem and leading to their removal by some publishers. "Wells had a whole chapter on [the drawings]," West said. "People overlooked the error because Haeckel was a Darwinist. They were so attracted by such a powerful depiction that we came from a common ancestor they overlooked the weakness in it. It was not only a logical error but a factual error."

Another correction involved an experiment on the origin of building blocks of life known as the Milley-Urey experiment. Two textbooks now have inserted acknowledgements that it was based on ideas about the earth's early atmosphere that are no longer accepted by scientists, West said. Among other changes West listed:

- A textbook that repeatedly claimed animal embryos have gill slits — similar to the slits that enable fish to breathe — has dropped "this biologically bogus language."

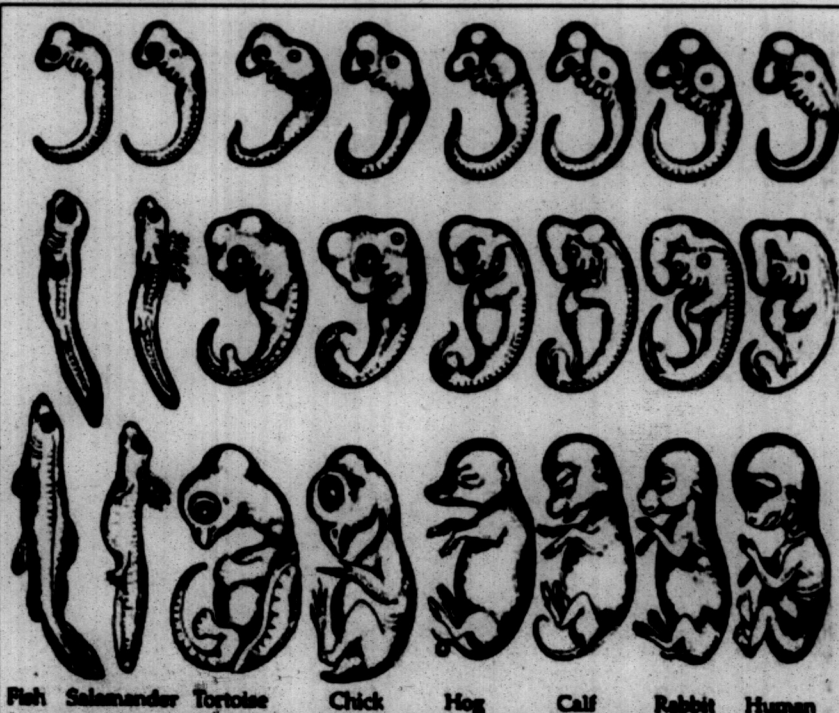
- One publisher inserted a minor clarification about peppered moths, noting that other studies had failed to duplicate the results reported by a scientist. The tests reportedly showed that moths gradually changed from light to dark because darker moths were able to hide from birds, evidence of natural selection at work.

- West noted that other researchers found that peppered moths don't rest on exposed places of tree trunks. Citing an article last year in The New York Times about those findings, he said some texts had deleted any reference to the moths, but several had retained them.

"This is an uphill battle by people who want to correct these errors," said West, who said corrections were made begrudgingly. "To even correct these 20 errors was a [struggle]. But Texas law requires the errors be corrected and that scientific weaknesses of evolutionary theory be taught."

"Any time you overstate the case for Darwinism, you're

misleading students. If these are the only changes made, there are still a lot of problems. We have a list of remaining errors we still want fixed; it is 14 pages long."



West charged that dogmatic Darwinists didn't want any changes made because of fears students will start thinking critically about evolution and question some of its validity. The Seattle professor also said Darwinists try to paint all critics as uneducated laymen when in fact people like well-known biochemist Michael Behe and others have raised serious questions about Darwinism.

"Our idea is students need to learn more about Darwinism," West said. "There are controversies and flaws about Darwinism that they need to know about. We should make sure that students know not only about Darwin's theory, but about problems with it. That's good science education."

However, Schafersman disputed West's comments, saying the Discovery Institute is creating imaginary weaknesses as a pretense to attack the validity of evolution. "They're straw men analogies, that's all they are," the Texas scientist declared. "They're not scientifically valid and every scientist testified against these examples that the Discovery Institute presented."

Commenting on the list of corrections issued by the institute, Schafersman scoffed at them as "inconsequential."

Some of the other changes involved minor clarifications, but none of them affected the presence of strong evolutionary theory in the textbooks, Schafersman said.

DISCREDITED — "Haeckel's embryos," shown here in an original draft by German biologist Ernst Haeckel, have been removed from at least two science textbooks. The drawings lack any demonstrable scientific basis but were published for years to show early stage similarities among various species. (BP illustration)

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Chaplains see tragedies, hardships of war

BAGHDAD, Iraq (BP) — The toughest thing Chaplain (Col.) Doug Carver has faced since arriving in Baghdad less than a year ago was seeing the dead body of a soldier with whom he had just shaken hands less than 30 minutes before.



Carver

Complaints headed to Congress

WASHINGTON (BP) — A longstanding dispute between evangelical chaplains and the U.S. Navy Chaplain Corps may soon enter the corridors of Congress. North Carolina Rep. Walter Jones has asked the chairman of the House Armed Services Committee, Duncan Hunter (R-Cal.) to schedule a congressional hearing in 2004 about complaints of discrimination leveled at the corps.

The Republican representative, in a letter to Duncan just prior to the Thanksgiving recess, referred to a growing crisis in the Chaplain Corps. With five lawsuits filed against the Navy, Jones said, it appears that a policy problem exists that should be examined by the committee.

"With our military personnel engaged around the world in the current global war on terror, the prospect that they may be called on to pay the ultimate sacrifice is perhaps more real than ever," Jones said. "Accordingly, the spiritual health of [them] and their families is just as important as their physical health."

The sight of 18 black body bags, victims of a recent Chinook helicopter crash, being loaded onto a C-130 is still fresh in the mind of Chaplain Major Dan Wackerhagen.

Chaplain (Cap.) Eddie Cook will never forget holding a young soldier from his battalion as he died from a mortal wound to the head, the first death for his unit.

These chaplains, like the men and women they minister to, have had to face death head-on since Operation Iraqi Freedom began in late March. It is hard and sometimes frightening but these Southern Baptist seminary graduates all credit God for getting them through.

"You never know Jesus until He's all you've got," said Carver, the highest-ranking chaplain currently in Iraq, sta-

tioned at the Coalition Provisional Authority headquarters in Baghdad. He oversees more than 350 chaplains and 350 chaplain assistants throughout the country.

"I haven't had my wife here, my children; just an army cot in a corner," he reflected. "Finding that quiet place has been hard."

Along the way, numerous challenges have arisen. For Carver, putting the chemical gear on every time there was a missile attack threat in the early days of the war was almost claustrophobic.

"You're sitting in your bunker elbow to elbow with soldiers who are looking to you for strength," Carver said. "I was telling my wife how suiting up was starting to get to me, and she says, 'I'm going to pray that when you put it on that God will sing to you - try to remember [the hymn] God's Garden.' The next attack we had, I'm running to get my gear on and I hear the words to the hymn 'In the Garden' in my mind. I felt peace the entire time."

For Wackerhagen, the war also has been a family affair. "My son got called up about the same time I did," he said, speaking of his 19-year-old who joined the National Guard to help pay for college and is now in Fallujah, Iraq. "We were actually three tents away from each other here at BIAP [Baghdad International Airport] for about 10 days at the beginning of the war. I saw him eight days ago as he was heading home for a two-week leave."

"I didn't want to hear a whole lot about the battles he's been in, though. I'm still his dad." Nevertheless, "We did trade a few war stories."

Wackerhagen is responsible for spiritual activities at Baghdad International Airport, overseeing 35 chaplains and 60 various chapel services for tens of thousands of soldiers who live there

or pass through. But he quickly points out that the soldiers he's in charge of ministering to also have ministered to him.

"My faith continually is made stronger by the soldiers that are here, the spirit they have and the willingness with which they sacrifice," Wackerhagen said, his eyes tearing up. "I am truly inspired daily. I believe what we're doing to stop terrorism is so important — any doubt in my mind was erased the first weeks we were here."

In the wake of the escalation in insurgent attacks and as more

to himself that God would keep them safe. To his amazement, the 80 mph winds subsided. Cook praised God for it, but felt God ask him why he hadn't prayed out loud so that everyone would know it was Him at work.

Cook soon had his second chance. Several days later, back at their base camp, another windstorm blew up. Fifty-man tents were about to blow away and metal poles were snapping and thrashing about.

"Lights were crashing around us and a man got on each pole to hold down the tent," Cook said.

Someone yelled for Cook to pray and he immediately had a flashback of his experience in the desert. "I placed my faith in Him and left the pole I was holding down. I stood in the middle of the tent and called upon the name of Jesus to calm the wind and save us. The wind subsided and the men all looked at me in amazement. I think I looked pretty amazed as well."

Cook believes that faith gives a soldier hope in knowing that he's not alone. "God gives us confidence in our salvation, so if we do die, we will be with our Lord. Soldiers can grow in their faith when



Wackerhagen

soldiers have taken fire, chaplains have gone to one another for support, Wackerhagen said. Combat debriefings are important for both the soldiers and the chaplains.

"I've sat with guys who have been hit three or four times," he said. "It's tough to go back out there. There's a mistake people make. They think the longer you're in the Army, the tougher you are but actually, it becomes a lot tougher, definitely not easier."

Chaplain Cook knows what it's like to experience the power of prayer. As a chaplain for the 82nd Airborne, Third Battalion, he has seen the men in his unit spared from countless attacks from both the enemy and from nature.

"Soon after deploying to the war, I noticed that it seemed like my prayers were more effectual and answered quickly," Cook recounted. "We were in the desert shooting at ranges in Kuwait before the war when this huge windstorm hit us. I felt God tell me to pray for it to calm, and more than that, I had soldiers calling upon me to pray."

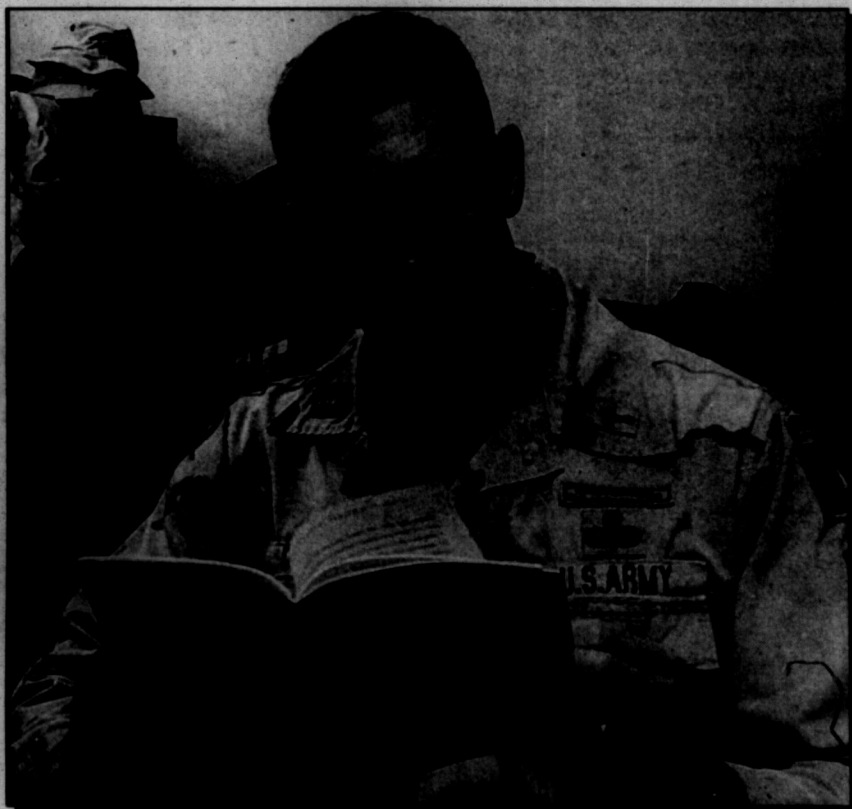
Cook assured them he would, and he prayed quietly

they're at war. It's such a privilege to be able to see a soldier accept Jesus, baptize him, disciple him in study and prayer, and see him grow to witness himself."

One of the toughest challenges for Cook hasn't been in the war zone — it's what is waiting for him at home. "My wife was seven months pregnant when we deployed on Valentine's Day," he said. "When our first child Edward was born, I was here in the heart of the war. It's difficult not to be able to see my son, but I know God will provide a spiritual bond for us."

Cook sings Jesus Loves Me to Edward every chance he gets to call home. It's his way of connecting to the little boy he's never seen in person. "I want to teach Edward about our Lord Jesus Christ, how to be a God-fearing young man, and the truth of the Bible," Cook said. "Teach him how to camp, how to shoot and to enjoy the outdoors."

What will he do when he finally gets to see his son? "The first thing I'm going to do is sing Jesus Loves Me to him before I hold him," said Cook, wiping his eyes.



Cook

FAMILY BIBLE STUDY

How I Give

II Corinthians 9:1-15

By Ken Anderson

There is an old adage on giving that says, "give until it hurts." A revised version says, "give until it hurts and keep on giving until it stops hurting." Why should giving be the occasion to initiate or relieve pain? Then there is the one that says, "give with a holy giggle and until there is holy hilarity." Paul wrote to the Corinthians that God particularly loves a cheerful giver (9:7). The Greek word cheerful is *hilaros* from which the English word *hilarity* is derived.

In II Corinthians 8 Paul continued to challenge the Corinthians to follow through with their relief offering for the Jerusalem believers. In chapter 8 Paul challenged the Corinthians to give. In chapter 9 he challenged them to give generously.

BE READY (9:1-5)

Paul did not need to rehearse his instructions on giving to the Corinthians. They were aware of the needs of the Jerusalem believers (v.1). Paul had boasted of their initial zeal in collecting their offering; it had motivated many of the Macedonians to give (v.2). Their original enthusiasm had faded. They needed to follow through and complete their offering and confirm Paul's self-confidence in them. An embarrassing situation could develop if the Macedonians discovered the Corinthian offering was not ready when they arrived with Paul (vs. 3-4). To prevent this Paul sent Titus and two brethren to make sure the offering was finalized before he arrived in Corinth. Paul wanted their gifts given



Anderson

willingly as a blessing (bounty), not given under pressure or as extorted (covetousness) before he arrived (v.5). There was still an opportunity to demonstrate their genuine willing attitude to give.

BE GENEROUS (9:6-7)

Paul used an example from agriculture to show the benefits of generous giving. The farmer who sows a few seeds will produce a low yield harvest, while sowing many seeds will result in a high yield harvest. Read Proverbs 22:9 and Galatians 6:7-8. Paul's point was that stingy giving yields meager blessings, while generous giving yields greater blessings (v. 6).

Giving should be a choice ("purposeth") from the heart, not out of pain ("grudgingly") or obligation ("necessity") (v. 7). With the proper attitude God enables people to give, that in turn they can share generously to meet others needs.

Paul used scripture to support his point. First he used

Psalm 112:9 (v.9). Second, he used scripture similar to Isaiah 55:10 and Hosea 10:12 (v. 10). The liberal giver will be abundantly supplied ("Ministereth") with all the resources for a harvest of righteousness, not lacking resources for giving.

BE THANKFUL (9:11-15)

The cheerful giver is grateful for the blessing received from God and the recipients are grateful to God for the generosity of those who enriched their lives. This holy service or ministry ("administration") was done unto the Lord and met the "saints" needs in Jerusalem (v. 12). Their generosity would prove ("experiment") their genuine commitment to the Jewish Christians (v. 13). Paul anticipated two responses from the Jerusalem believers to the Corinthians' generosity. First, their generous offering would move the Jerusalem believers to intercede for the Corinthians ("pray for you"). Second, it would draw ("long after") the Gentile and Jewish believers closer together (v. 14). Paul concluded with an outburst

of gratitude for God's indescribable gift of Jesus Christ (v. 15).

INSIGHTS FROM THE TEXT:

Talk about Giving: It is clear that Paul offered no apologies, and had no reservations about addressing the subject of giving.

Cheerful Giving is Blessed: Another adage is, "God loves a cheerful giver, but He will accept from a grudge." Gifts can be use no matter how grudgingly given. God blesses the cheerful giver, and the blessings are in portion to the motive of the giver.

Giving Honors God: Paul's teaching cannot be taken to mean that one can become rich by giving. As someone has said, "we receive by giving but we do not give to receive."

Giving Endures: Psalm 112:9 reads in part, "... His righteousness endureth forever." How can our gifts endure? The Mississippi Baptist Foundation an agency of the Mississippi Baptist Convention can provide guidance and options for those desiring to do so.

Anderson is pastor of First Church, Saltillo.

EXPLORE THE BIBLE

Taking Seriously God's Message

Jonah 2:10-3:10

By Ann Maniscalco

In last week's lesson we saw what happened when Jonah decided to rebel against God's clear call and commission. The sovereign Lord got His reluctant prophet's attention, allowing him to spend three days wallowing in the gastric juices of a large fish's stomach, resulting in his repentance. This week, we find Jonah being regurgitated, and recommitting himself to the task he could not escape.

HEARING GOD'S WORD (JONAH 2:10-3:4)

After the fish "vomited Jonah onto dry land" (2:10), the Lord spoke to him "a second time" (3:1). Do you wonder why that was necessary? Perhaps the Lord saw the necessity of reconfirming to Jonah that he still had a job to do. Sometimes when believers

fail, they begin to listen to Satan's lies, as he tries to convince them that God no longer wants to use them. Nothing could be further from the truth! Jesus, on the night of his betrayal, said to Peter, "Satan has asked to sift you as wheat" (Luke 22:31). Even as Jesus knew Peter would deny Him in the coming hours, He assured Peter of His prayers, telling him, "when you have turned back, strengthen your brothers" — what love!

God gave Jonah a simple but powerful message of judgment to proclaim to the inhabitants of the very important city of Nineveh. As he entered the outskirts of this Assyrian stronghold, he began to proclaim a seemingly unpopular message: "Forty more days and Nineveh will be overturned". Surely he wondered what the conse-



Maniscalco

quences of his preaching would be — would the people heed his message, or would they torture, kill or just ignore him?

HEEDING GOD'S WORD (JONAH 3:5-9)

Jonah's message was God's message, anointed with convicting power from on high. The result? "The Ninevites believed God" (verse 5). Wide-scale repentance took place, evidenced by all of them fasting and covering themselves with sackcloth. Even the king — when he heard this grim forecast — "took off his royal robes" (verse 6) and followed suit. He called the nation to "give up their evil ways and their violence" (verse 8) in hopes that God would relent and be merciful to them.

EXPERIENCING GOD'S MERCY (JONAH 3:10)

God looked at the actions of the Ninevites, but He also looked deep within their hearts. When He saw "how they turned from their evil ways, he had compassion and did not bring upon

them the destruction he had threatened" (verse 10). What mercy — what grace! No acts of penance were required, no good deeds were demanded to merit this free gift. This massive populace received undeserved forgiveness, and their lives would never be the same again. Many who are reading this lesson have experienced the "gift of God" (Romans 6:23 and Ephesians 2:8) through repenting of your sins and placing your faith in the Lord Jesus. Some, however, may be depending on good works, church membership, or a vague emotional experience, thinking — and hoping — you will be found acceptable in God's eyes as a result of these things. My friend, if it were possible to reach God in such ways, then Jesus' cruel death on the cross would have been unnecessary. If this scenario describes you, I have good news — Jesus desires to save you! Call on Him and let Him make you a new person today! Jonah — whether willingly or unwillingly — was obedient to God's call. Then, as today, the Father's unfathomable love reaches to the ends of the earth and to the depths of human

depravity to rescue precious souls from sin and spiritual death. Jesus reiterated this truth — His desire to "draw all men" (John 12:32) to Himself, and He uses believers as channels of this message.

If we are not actively engaged in sharing His love with others, how can we claim to love Jesus? We must be willing to leave our comfort zone to engage in the spiritual warfare necessary to confront Satan, who zealously seeks to keep millions in spiritual bondage! Perhaps God is commissioning you to develop relationships and to share a witness with those in your community. Or His Spirit may be calling you to serve as a missionary in another part of the country, or in a remote region of the world, among a people of a different culture or tongue.

During this month of International Missions emphasis, ask God to give you His vision for "all nations" (Matthew 28:19). As He leads, be willing to pray, give and go as never before!

Maniscalco is member of First Church, Ocean Springs.

Lecturer: homosexuals in need of Gospel

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CNPG TFV, QWVVQN
CQFAD; CFG WV WR
SFOG CPVING'R KFFJ
BQNPROGN VF KWLN
SFO VIN DWTJFE.

QODN VXNQLN:
VIWGVSVXF

Clue: L = V
Have fun with cryptography
and exercise your Bible knowl-
edge. A King James Version
Bible verse has been encoded
by letter substitution. The same
letter is substituted throughout
the puzzle. Solve by trial and
error. Answer to last week's
puzzle: Acts 13:26

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP) — Author and counselor Joe Dallas believes that homosexuals often look at Christians and see only one message: hatred. That's not necessarily because Christians preach hate, Dallas said, but it's because the message about homosexuality sometimes seems one-sided.

"I find to this day that there is a certain wrath Christians often express towards this sin that they do not express towards other sins — both sexual and non-sexual — and that's a problem. It's an imbalance," said Dallas, a former homosexual and the author of several books on homosexuality, including *Desires in Conflict: Hope for Men Who Struggle With Sexual Identity*.

Don't get Dallas wrong: He believes homosexuality is a sin and he believes homosexuals can be freed from their lifestyle through faith in Christ. But he also believes Christians should "recommit to bold love."

"[W]hich means, in essence, we love the people we oppose boldly, even as we oppose them," he told Baptist Press.

Dallas is one of several speakers coming to Nashville as part of Focus on the Family's Love Won Out conference next Feb. 7. The conference is geared toward Christians who desire to learn about the homosexual movement and who also want to know how best to reach out to homosexuals. It will be held at Two Rivers Baptist Church.

Future conferences are scheduled for Pensacola, Fla., in April and Raleigh, N.C., in June. The conferences "help equip Christians to speak more effectively," Dallas said.

The conference will tackle such questions as: Is homosex-

uality genetic? What's being taught in public schools? What should I say to my children about it?

The conference's aim is similar to the focus of a report released by a Southern Baptist task force this summer that encouraged Southern Baptist churches to reach out to homosexuals while standing firm on the truth that homosexuality is a sin.

Dallas heads Genesis Counseling, a Southern California ministry that helps people struggling with sexual sin. Dallas said his struggle with homosexuality lasted from 1978-1984, during which he says he was a "backslidden Christian."

Eventually he "just felt a hunger for what I had walked away from," he said, "and that was the beginning of the change for me."

Dallas is scheduled to deliver three lectures at the conference, one of which is an exhortation to the church. The church, he said, must repent of its own sexual sins, repent of its hostility toward homosexuals and repent of being intimidated by the homosexual movement. The church should recommit to living holy lives and reaching out to homosexuals, he added.

"I think we have many moral problems in the church — many Christian men and women using pornography, many sexual couples sexually involved before marriage,

many Christians are watching completely inappropriate material," he said.

"With that amount of moral compromise in the church, we're very ill-equipped to address moral issues in the country. So first, I believe we need to look at our own immorality in general and recommit to holiness."

Christians also must stand firm for truth, Dallas said. "To say that we believe it is a sin is crucial," he said. "To be sure not to compromise Scripture is crucial."

The message, though, must be balanced with love, he said. He recounted how once,

when he was a guest on Hank Hanegraaff's radio program, he heard an audio clip of a preacher saying that God was "going to destroy the homosexual community with fire" by a particular year. The audience applauded, Dallas said. That year already has passed.

"It's chilling that people could actually applaud the notion that a whole group of people was going to be destroyed," Dallas said. "That's a far cry from opposing homosexual sin. That's rejoicing in the idea that homosexuals are going to die. If you were a homosexual and you heard that, I think you'd find it very hard to believe that Christians loved you."

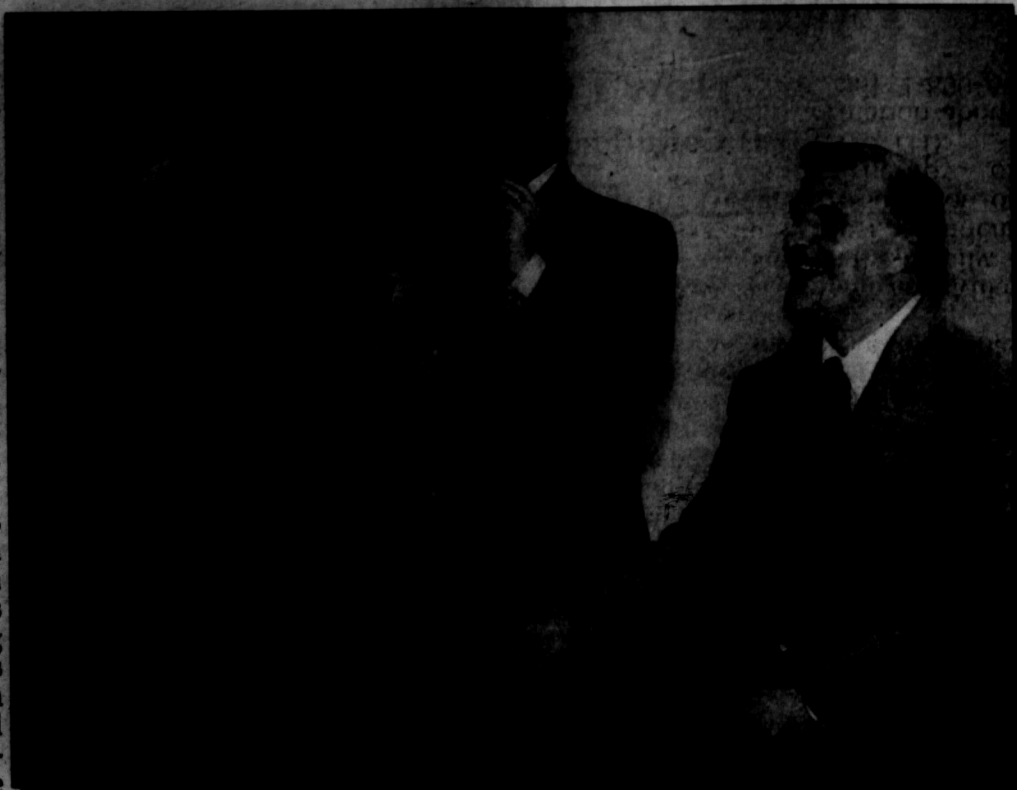
Christians nevertheless must make their views known in the political arena, Dallas said, especially in light of the Massachusetts court ruling for same-sex marriage, the U.S. Supreme Court's ruling striking down anti-sodomy laws and Hollywood's promotion of homosexuality.

"We've got to repent of being intimidated by the gay rights movement," he said. "... More than ever, I think we need to repent of being cowed by that and resume our role as salt and light."

In addition to Dallas, scheduled conference speakers are:

- Jane Boyer, a former lesbian and a current speaker for Exodus International.
- Dick M. Carpenter II, a teacher and public policy analyst.
- Melissa Fryrear and Mike Haley of Focus on the Family.
- Joseph Nicolosi, president of the National Association of Research and Therapy of Homosexuality (NARTH).

For more information about the conference call 1-800-A-FAMILY.



HOW TO RESPOND? — Joe Dallas (right) and Focus on the Family's John Paulk (center) share a message with Southern Seminary students and with Focus on the Family's Mike Haley (left) during a Spring 2003 presentation at the Louisville, Ky., school on homosexual activism and how the church should respond to the homosexual rights movement. (BP photo by David Merrifield)